No. 90-8184-CFY
Status: DECIDED

Title: Billy Wayne Coleman, Petitioner
v.
United States

Docketed:
May 30, 1991

Court: United States Court of Appeals
for the Sixth Circuit

See also:
90-8126

Counsel for petitioner: Ferguson,April R.

Counsel for respondent: Solicitor General

Entry	Date	Note	Proceedings and Orders
1	May 30 1991	D	Petition for writ of certiorari and motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis filed.
4	Jun 28 1991		Order extending time to file response to petition until August 2, 1991.
5	Jul 29 1991		Brief of respondent United States in opposition filed.
			VIDED.
6	Aug 1 1991		DISTRIBUTED. September 30, 1991
8	Oct 7 1991		REDISTRIBUTED. October 11, 1991
10	Oct 15 1991		Petition DENIED. Dissenting opinion by Justice White. (Detached opinion.)
			**********

EDITOR'S NOTE:

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IN THE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1990

NO. 90-8184

RECEIVED
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SUPREME COURT, U.S.

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN,

Petitioner,

vs.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

MOTION FOR LEAVE TO
PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS

Petitioner, Billy Wayne Coleman, pursuant to Rule 39.1, Rules of the Supreme Court, and 18 U.S.C. §3006 A(d)(6), asks leave to filed the attached Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit without prepayment of costs and to proceed in forma pauperis. The Federal Public Defender Office was appointed to represent the defendant in the district court.

DATED this 29 day of May, 1991.

Respectfully Submitted,

April R. Ferguson
Assistant Federal Public Defender
Court-Appointed Attorney for
Defendant/Appellant,
Billy Wayne Coleman
Suite 410, 100 North Main Building
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

IN THE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1990

NO. 90-8184

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN,

Petitioner,

vs.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR
THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

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QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

Should the clarifying amendment to Section 3C1.1 of the United States Sentencing Commission Guidelines, which amendment became effective on November 1, 1990, be applicable to the defendant's sentence pronounced on July 13, 1990; and if so, did the district court commit error by imposing the two point enhancement under Section 3C1.1?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
TABLE OF CASES AND AUTHORITIES	iii
OPINION BELOW	2
JURISDICTION	2
STATUTES INVOLVED	2
STATEMENT OF THE CASE	3
REASONS RELIED UPON FOR THE ALLOWANCE OF THE WRIT OF CERTIORARI	4
Relevant Facts	4
Argument	6
CONCLUSION	12
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE	13
APPENDIX	14

TABLE OF CASES AND AUTHORITIES

CASES	PAGE
Callahan vs. United States, 881 F.2d 229 (6th Cir. 1989)	10
Davis vs. United States, 417 U.S. 333, 94 S.Ct. 2298 (1974)	10,11
Mistretta vs. United States, 488 U.S. 361, 109 S.Ct. 647 (1987)	10
United States vs. Aguilera-Zapata, 901 F.2d 1209 (5th Cir. 1990)	8
United States vs. Deigert, 916 F.2d 916 (4th Cir. 1990)	8
United States vs. Dortch, 923 F.2d 629 (8th Cir. 1991)	6,8
United States vs. Fiala, 929 F.2d 285 (7th Cir. 1991)	8
United States vs. Galvan-Garcia, 872 F.2d 638 (5th Cir. 1989)	7
United States vs. Irvin, 906 F.2d 1424 (10th Cir. 1990)	8
United States vs. Jackson, 924 F.2d 1059, No. 90-1609 (6th Cir., 2/1/91)(unpublished)	6,8,9
United States vs. Luster, 889 F.2d 1523 (6th Cir. 1989)	8
United States vs. Nissen, 928 F.2d 690 (5th Cir. 1991)	8
United States vs. Nottingham, 898 F.2d 390 (3rd Cir. 1990)	9
United States vs. Ofchinick, 877 F.2d 251 (3rd Cir. 1989)	8
United States vs. Perdomo, 927 F.2d 111 (2nd Cir. 1991)	9,11
United States vs. Russell, 913 F.2d 1288 (8th Cir. 1990)	8

United States vs. Sanchez,
928 F.2d 1450 (6th Cir. 1991) 9

United States vs. Scroggins,
880 F.2d 1204 (11th Cir. 1989) 7

United States vs. Shelton,
848 F.2d 1485 (10th Cir. 1988) 10

United States vs. Smith,
900 F.2d 1442 (10th Cir. 1990) 10

United States vs. Urbanek,
No. 90-3242 (10th Cir., 4/23/91)
1991 U.S. App. LEXIS 6938 9

Other Authorities

Section 3B1.1(b), United States Sentencing
Commission Guidelines 9

Section 3C1.1, United States Sentencing
Commission Guidelines 2,4,5,6,7
8,9,10,11

Section 3C1.2, United States Sentencing
Commission Guidelines 10

Title 18, United States Code, §3553 9

IN THE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1990

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN,

Petitioner,

vs.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI
TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

Petitioner, Billy Wayne Coleman, respectfully prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit entered March 21, 1991, a copy of which is attached herewith.

OPINION BELOW

The Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit entered its opinion affirming the judgment of the district court on March 21, 1991. A copy of the opinion, United States vs. Coleman, 90-6065 (6th Cir., 3/21/91), is annexed in the appendix.

JURISDICTION

On March 21, 1991, the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit entered its ruling affirming the district court. Jurisdiction to review the judgment of the Court of Appeals is conferred upon this Court by Title 28 U.S.C. §1254.

STATUTES INVOLVED

The petition for writ of certiorari involves the application of Section 3C1.1 of the United States Sentencing Commission Guidelines, and Application Note 3(d) thereto, which are set out in the petition.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On December 18, 1989, the Federal Grand Jury for the Western District of Tennessee, sitting in Memphis, returned an indictment charging the defendant with two counts of possession with intent to distribute cocaine base, in violation of Title 21 U.S.C. §841(a)(1).

Upon the not guilty plea of the defendant, a jury trial commenced on May 21, 1989, and the jury returned a verdict of guilty as to both counts of the indictment on May 22. A presentence report was prepared, and on July 13, the court sentenced the defendant to seventy-eight months imprisonment, followed by four years of supervised release. The court's Judgment Including Sentence Under the Sentencing Reform Act was entered July 24, 1990, and the defendant filed a timely Notice of Appeal on July 27.

The Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit affirmed the district court judgment on March 12, 1991.

REASONS RELIED UPON FOR THE ALLOWANCE OF THE WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Issue: Should the clarifying amendment to Section 3C1.1 of the United States Sentencing Commission Guidelines, which amendment became effective on November 1, 1990, be applicable to the defendant's sentence pronounced on December 8, 1989; and if so, did the district court commit error by imposing the two point enhancement under Section 3C1.1.

Relevant Facts

On November 22, 1989, Officer Melvin Bibbs of the Memphis Police Department received information that the defendant, Billy Wayne Coleman, was staying in the Royal Oaks Motel at Watkins and Thomas Street in Memphis, Tennessee. Because Bibbs and another officer, Sergeant Thweatt, had made an undercover buy of cocaine from the defendant through an informant, they set up a surveillance of the motel and procured someone to call the defendant to advise that police were in route to the hotel.

The defendant and a female companion left the motel room and entered a Ford Fiesta, and Officer Bibbs attempted with his van to block the defendant's exit. When the defendant eluded the officer, Bibbs and Sergeant Thweatt pursued the vehicle and stopped it on Watkins near St. Elmo Street. He observed "someone" throw a "yellow-looking bag" out of the passenger side of the Ford Fiesta. The officers subdued the defendant and his female companion, after which Officer Bibbs retrieved the yellow bag which had been thrown from the Ford Fiesta, and found therein

substances later identified as cocaine and cocaine base (crack). He returned to the scene of the arrest, showed the drugs to the defendant, and spread them on the ground where they could be seen.

After the defendant's trial, the Probation Office prepared a report which recommended that the defendant receive a two-point enhancement in his sentence because his act of discarding the drugs amounted to willful obstruction of justice under Section 3C1.1 of the United States Sentencing Commission Guidelines. The defendant objected to the enhancement. During the sentencing hearing, the court found that the defendant either threw the drugs from the vehicle or he procured or caused them to be thrown. The court added that the defendant's flight from the Royal Oaks Motel was not alone evidence of obstruction of justice, but the defendant's attempt to elude apprehension was additional evidence that he was attempting to rid himself of the drugs.

The defendant's brief was filed soon after the November 1, 1990, amendment to Section 3C1.1. This section and Application Note read:

> §3C1.1 Obstruction or Impeding the Administration of Justice If the defendant willfully obstructed or impeded, or attempted to obstruct or impede, the administration of justice during the investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of the instant offense, increase the offense level by 2 levels.
>
> Application Notes:
>
> 3. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of the types of conduct to which

this enhancement applies:

> ... (d) destroying or concealing or directing or procuring another person to destroy or conceal evidence that is material to an official investigation or judicial proceeding (e.g., shredding a document or destroying ledgers upon learning that an official investigation has commenced or is about to commence), or attempting to do so; however, if such conduct occurred contemporaneously with arrest (e.g., attempting to swallow or throw away a controlled substance), it shall not, standing alone, be sufficient to warrant an adjustment for obstruction unless it resulted in a material hindrance to the official investigation or prosecution of the instant offense or the sentencing of the offender;...

The defendant contended that the above was a clarifying amendment to Section 3C1.1 as it existed prior to November 1, 1990, and should therefore apply to the sentence imposed on July 13, 1990. The court was not persuaded by the defendant's reliance on the post-sentencing amendment, and held that under the guidelines in effect on the date of sentencing, "defendant's attempt to dispose of the drugs (by his own actions or by directing another) in combination with the high-speed chase was sufficient to invoke the enhancement." Page 11 of court's opinion. The court cited United States vs. Jackson, 924 F.2d 1059, No. 90-1609 (6th Cir., 2/1/91) (unpublished), and United States vs. Dortch, 923 F.2d 629 (8th Cir. 1991), in support of its ruling.

Argument

The Court of Appeals opinion, pages 10-11, correctly notes that Section 3C1.1 of the Sentencing Guidelines, effective November 1, 1989, states that "destroying or concealing material evidence, or . . . directing another person to destroy or conceal

material evidence, or attempting to do so," may provide a proper basis for the two point enhancement for obstruction of justice. (reference to Application Note 1[a]). On page 12 of its opinion, the court relied upon United States vs. Galvan-Garcia, 872 F.2d 638, 639-41 (5th Cir. 1989), in holding that the two point enhancement for obstruction of justice should apply. Galvin-Garcia was decided prior to the November 1, 1990 amendment to Section 3C1.1.

Amendment 347, Appendix C, page C.193 of the United States Sentencing Commission Guidelines Manual, incorporating guideline amendments effective November 1, 1990, notes that the amendment, among other things, "clarifies the operation of §3C1.1." The Eleventh Circuit has commented on the Sentencing Commission's amendments to the guidelines:

> Since originally promulgated in October, 1987, the commentary to the guidelines has been amended several times. Such amendments no doubt will continue to be made at frequent intervals as the Sentencing Commission responds to ambiguities and interpretive problems discovered by the federal courts in applying the guidelines to the facts of particular cases. In most cases, we note that these amendments do not effect a substantive change, but rather are intended only to clarify the rule adopted by a particular guideline. Such amendments thus constitute strongly persuasive evidence of how the Sentencing Commission originally envisioned that the courts would apply the Guidelines. We therefore consider such clarifying amendments to the guidelines' commentary in interpreting the guidelines, even with regard to offenders convicted of offenses occurred before the effective date of the amendments. [emphasis added]

United States vs. Scroggins, 880 F.2d 1204, 1215 (11th Cir.

1989). The various circuits have recognized that clarifying amendments should be given substantial weight in determining the meaning of the existing guidelines. United States vs. Luster, 889 F.2d 1523, 1529 (6th Cir. 1989), United States vs. Ofchinick, 877 F.2d 251, 257, n.9, (3rd Cir. 1989), United States vs. Deigert, 916 F.2d 916, 917 (4th Cir. 1990), and United States vs. Irvin, 906 F.2d 1424, 1427 (10th Cir. 1990).

The court should sentence the defendant in accordance with the guidelines in effect at the time of sentencing. United States vs. Russell, 913 F.2d 1288, 1291 (8th Cir. 1990), citing Title 18 U.S.C. §3553(a)(4) and §3553(b). There is a conflict among the circuits whether clarifying amendments, including the November 1, 1990 amendment to Section 3C1.1, apply to sentences pronounced before the amendments. United States vs. Jackson, 924 F.2d 1059, No. 90-1609 (6th Cir., 2/1/91) (unpublished), and United States vs. Dortsch, 923 F.2d 629, 632, fn. 2 (8th Cir. 1991), hold that the November, 1990 amendment to Section 3C1.1, Application Note 3(d), is inapplicable to sentencings prior to November 1, 1990.

Other circuits have recognized that clarifying amendments may be appropriate to consider, even though the amendment "was not effective at the time of sentencing for the offense in question." United States vs. Nissen, 928 F.2d 690, 694-95 (5th Cir. 1991), citing United States vs. Aguilera-Zapata, 901 F.2d 1209, 1213-14 (5th Cir. 1990). In United States vs. Fiala, 929 F.2d 285, 290 (10th Cir. 1991), the court relied upon Application

Notes 3(g) and 4 to Section 3C1.1, as amended November 1, 1990, to reverse the trial court's two point enhancement for obstruction of justice, noting:

> Although the Commentary amendments technically do not apply to Fiala, we believe it proper to consider them in our interpretation of §3C1.1 (which was not itself amended), and we see no reason to ignore such help from the Sentencing Commission in our attempt to give meaning to the less substantive pre-1990 commentary.

A very similar result is found in United States vs. Urbanek, No. 90-3242 (10th Cir., 4/23/91), 1991 U.S. App. LEXIS 6938, where the court, utilizing Application Note 3(g), rejected the two point enhancement because it was "undisputed" that the defendant's false statements "did not significantly impede or obstruct the investigation." Also see United States vs. Sanchez, 928 F.2d 1450, 1459 (6th Cir. 1991), in which the court, seemingly contrary to its opinion in the present case and United States vs. Jackson, supra, applied Application Note 4 of Section 3C1.1, effective November 1, 1990, even though the court recognized that the district court "did not have the benefit of the more refined interpretation of §3C1.1 provided by the Sentencing Commission in the amended commentary...."

United States vs. Perdomo, 927 F.2d 111, 116 (2nd Cir. 1991), found that the November, 1990 clarifying amendment to Section 3B1.1(b) precluded any interpretation of the word "offense" not including uncharged conduct. Even though the amendment was not in effect at sentencing and the meaning thereof was "not reflected in prior case law," the court held that "prior to

the November 1990 amendments the Guidelines did link the determination of role in the offense to relevant conduct outside the offense of conviction."

The Sentencing Guidelines are to be interpreted as if they were a statute or court rule, United States vs. Smith, 900 F.2d 1442, 1446 (10th Cir. 1990), and they have the force of law, United States vs. Nottingham, 898 F.2d 390, 393 (3rd Cir. 1990); each citing Mistretta vs. United States, 488 U.S. 361, 109 S.Ct. 647, 664-65. A new rule of law is to be applied retroactively if the court declares that the defendant was punished for an act which a statute does not make criminal. Callahan vs. United States, 881 F.2d 229, 231-32 (6th Cir. 1989), citing Davis vs. United States, 417 U.S. 333, 94 S.Ct. 2298 (1974). See United States vs. Shelton, 848 F.2d 1485, 1489-90 (10th Cir. 1988).

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in the present case, obviously referring to Section 3C1.2 of the Sentencing Guidelines effective November 1, 1990, stated in dicta that a "high speed flight can justify enhancement for reckless endangerment." Page 11 of opinion. Section 3C1.2 reads:

> Reckless Endangerment During Flight If the defendant recklessly created a substantial risk of death of serious bodily injury to another person in the course of fleeing from a law enforcement office, increase by 2 levels.

There is no proof that anyone was exposed to a "risk of death or serious bodily injury" and the trial court made no such finding. Rather, the court referred to the defendant's flight as an attempt to elude apprehension, which attempt was additional

evidence of his trying to get rid of the drugs.

The evidence is undisputed that the defendant's alleged discarding of the crack cocaine did not impede the investigation in any respect. The drugs were retrieved by the police officer immediately after the defendant's apprehension. Section 3C1.1 of the Guidelines, as explained in the clarifying Application Note 3(d), effective November 1, 1990, was never intended to apply to an actual or attempted concealment or destruction of evidence not resulting in a material hindrance to a criminal investigation. The amendment revealed the original intent of the Sentencing Commission, United States vs. Perdomo, supra, 927 F.2d at 116; and the defendant submits that the two point enhancement was imposed upon the defendant in contravention of the intent of Section 3C1.1. The clarifying amendment should therefore preclude the increased sentence imposed upon the defendant. Davis vs. United States, supra.

CONCLUSION

The Sixth Circuit's decision conflicts with those in other circuits, as set forth herein, and the present petition presents an important issue of law which has not been decided by this Honorable Court. The Sentencing Guidelines are frequently amended, and the petitioner submits that the guidance of this Court is needed to clarify the manner in which the amendments should be applied. Wherefore, pursuant to Rule 10.1(a) and (c), the petitioner Billy Wayne Coleman respectfully prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

DATED: May 29, 1991.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Assistant Federal Defender
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IN THE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1990

NO. _____

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN,

Petitioner,

vs.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Respondent.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, April R. Ferguson, a member of the Bar of this Court, certify that pursuant to Rule 29, have served the Motion for Leave to Proceed in Forma Pauperis and the Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit on counsel for the respondent by enclosing a copy thereof, postage prepaid, addressed to the Solicitor General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530, and depositing same in the mails at Memphis, Tennessee, and further certify that all parties required to be served have been served.

This 29 day of May, 1991.

April R. Ferguson
Court Appointed Counsel for
Petitioner

90-5164

APPENDIX

1. Copy of United States vs. Coleman, No. 90-6065, (6th Cir., 2/27/91) (unpublished)

2. Copy of United States vs. Jackson, No. 90-1609 (6th Cir., 2/1/91) (unpublished)

3. Copy of United States vs. Urbanek, No. 90-3242 (10th Cir., 4/23/91).

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

No. 90-6065

FILED

MAR 21 1991

LEONARD GREEN, Clerk

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

BILLY W. COLEMAN,

Defendant-Appellant.

ON APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FULL-TEXT PUBLICATION

Sixth Circuit Rule 24 limits citation to specific situations. Please see Rule 24 before citing in a proceeding in a court in the Sixth Circuit. If cited, a copy must be served on other parties and the Court.

This notice is to be prominently displayed if this decision is reproduced.

BEFORE: MARTIN and MILBURN, Circuit Judges; and WELLFORD, Senior Circuit Judge.

PER CURIAM. Defendant-appellant Billy Wayne Coleman timely appeals the judgment of conviction and sentence entered after a jury convicted him of possession of cocaine base and cocaine with intent to distribute in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1). For the reasons that follow, we affirm.

I.

Prior to trial, defendant moved to suppress incriminating statements allegedly made by him at the time of his arrest. The following facts come from testimony at the suppression hearing.

After Memphis police officers Bibbs and Thweatt made a controlled purchase of cocaine from the defendant through an informant at the Royal Oaks Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, the officers arranged for defendant to learn that they were en route to his motel room. Defendant fled the room accompanied by a female friend later identified as Terri Bowens. Defendant was stopped after a short, high-speed chase, during which a yellow bag was seen flying from the passenger window of the vehicle defendant was driving. Officer Bibbs used some force to subdue defendant as he was still trying to escape after exiting the vehicle. Officer Thweatt took the female passenger into custody.

After subduing defendant, Officer Bibbs found the yellow bag, and it was full of drugs. While Officer Bibbs was taking photographs of the drugs, and before he informed defendant that he was under arrest or advised defendant of his Miranda rights, defendant blurted out: "[Terri Bowens] didn't know nothing [sic] about it. It was all mine." As defendant was not being interrogated, the statement was not in response to questioning.

Defendant was transported to the police station and advised of his rights. After that, he reiterated that the drugs were his and that the girl was not involved. Defendant eventually persuaded the police to set the girl free; however, defendant refused to make a written statement.

Both defendant and Ms. Bowens claim that they left the motel because of a call from the front desk advising them that it was time to check out. Defendant and Bowens also claim that they were mistreated by the police after they were stopped. Defendant was supposedly kicked in the ribs and struck in the ear with a gun, and Ms. Bowens was supposedly "snatched" out the window of the vehicle and thrown to the curb.

A suppression hearing concerning defendant's oral statements was held before a magistrate, and the magistrate rejected defendant's and Ms. Bowens' testimony finding it less credible than the testimony of Officer Bibbs. The magistrate concluded that there was "no police conduct or overreaching which coerced defendant Billy Wayne Coleman into giving his oral confession." Instead, "[d]efendant has his own personal motive (to obtain the release of his girl friend) for giving these [sic] statement, and thus, it is submitted, the statements were not coerced." The district

court adopted the magistrate's report and recommendation and added:

> [T]o the extent that the magistrate's report does not cover the issue of voluntariness of the statements made by defendant Coleman, as defendant contends, the court finds that the statements made were voluntarily [sic]. Defendant's statements were freely blurted out, not given in response to questioning and were not made under any type of threat of force or reprisal.

Thus, the district court denied the motion to suppress.

After defendant's conviction by a jury, the district court held a sentencing hearing in which it adopted the findings of fact set forth in the presentence report and concluded that a two-point enhancement of defendant's offense level was appropriate under section 3C1.1 of the guidelines. The court explained:

> [T]he proof was quite clear at this trial that the drugs did belong to Mr. Coleman and that there was no criminal involvement on behalf . . . of his companion in the car. Thus, while there is no direct proof as to who threw the drugs from the vehicle, there is evidence, circumstantial evidence from which the Court can conclude that the drugs were either thrown by Mr. Coleman or if not thrown by him, that he procured or caused them to be thrown. And under those circumstances, the Court believes that the two-point enhancement is warranted.
>
> There is developing case law also that indicates that flight in and of

> itself is not enough to impose the obstruction of justice enhancement. . . . [W]ithout finding that flight alone in this case amounts to obstruction of justice, the Court would note that Mr. Coleman was, in fact, the individual who was fleeing by driving his vehicle at a high rate of speed in trying to elude apprehension. And under those circumstances, that is just additional evidence that supports his involvement in attempting to get rid of the drugs.

The principal issues presented in this appeal are (1) whether the district court erred in failing to grant defendant's motion to suppress his incriminating statements, and (2) whether the district court erred in granting a two-point enhancement for obstruction of justice on the basis that defendant attempted to conceal or destroy material evidence during a high-speed chase.

II.

A. The Statements

The district court's factual findings made in consideration of the motion to suppress evidence must be upheld unless they are clearly erroneous. United States v. Coleman, 628 F.2d 961, 963 (6th Cir. 1980). However, the ultimate question of the voluntariness of an incriminating statement is a mixed question of fact and law subject to de novo review. See United States v. Murphy, 763 F.2d 202, 206 (6th Cir. 1985), cert. denied, 474 U.S. 1063 (1986).

Defendant contends that his violent arrest and the violent treatment of his female companion overcame his free will. Citing United States v. Brown, 557 F.2d 541 (6th Cir. 1977) (hostile arrest inflicting extensive injury in presence of 15 to 30 officers followed by confession in back of patrol car where prisoner was seen crying, screaming, and thrashing about), and United States v. Murphy, 763 F.2d 202, 205-06 (6th Cir. 1985) (confession made during attack by police dog which inflicted severe wounds), cert. denied, 474 U.S. 1063 (1986), defendant argues that the focus should not be on whether there was police misconduct but on the state of mind of the person who makes the incriminating statement.

The government correctly points out that the credibility determinations and other factual findings below show that defendant's arrest was not as violent as he would lead the court to believe. Moreover, the findings below cast strong doubt on whether Ms. Bowens was treated harshly. Even if Bowens was snatched from the window of the automobile, the totality of the circumstances, being in the early morning hours after a high-speed chase and without contemporaneous interrogation, confirms the finding that the defendant's statements were "not made under any type of threat of force or reprisal." Thus, Brown and Murphy are distinguishable from this case on the facts as found by the district court.

Moreover, to the extent Brown and Murphy allow a finding of involuntariness without police overreaching, they have been limited by the Supreme Court's holding in Colorado v. Connelly, 479 U.S. 157 (1986). In that case, the Supreme Court made it clear that coercive police activity is a necessary predicate to finding that a confession is involuntary. The Court also made it clear that "[t]he voluntariness of a waiver of [the Fifth Amendment] privilege has always depended on the absence of police overreaching, not on 'free choice' in any broader sense of the word." Connelly, 479 U.S. at 170. It should also be noted that in Murphy we interpreted Townsend v. Sain, 372 U.S. 293 (1963), as a case showing that a statement could be involuntary even in the absence of police misconduct. Murphy, 763 F.2d at 208. However, the Supreme Court interpreted Townsend as involving an "integral element of police overreaching." Connelly, 479 U.S. at 164.

The proper analysis in this circuit for testing the voluntariness of a confession is found in McCall v. Dutton, 863 F.2d 454, 459 (6th Cir. 1988), cert. denied, 490 U.S. 1020 (1989):

> The test for voluntariness of a confession involves three factors. Threshold to the determination that a confession was "involuntary" for due process purposes is the requirement that the police "extorted [the confession] from the accused by means of coercive

> activity." Once it is established that the police activity was objectively coercive, it is necessary to examine petitioner's subjective state of mind to determine whether the "coercion" in question was sufficient to overbear the will of the accused. Finally, petitioner must prove that his will was overborne because of the coercive police activity in question. If the police misconduct at issue was not the "crucial motivating factor" behind petitioner's decision to confess, the confession may not be suppressed.

Id. (citations omitted).

Under the analysis set forth in Dutton, the police activity in this case was not objectively coercive. Under the circumstances, the police were justified in promptly bringing the suspects under control. Although force was used, at least against defendant, there is no evidence to indicate that it was used as a threat or promise or in conjunction with any activity that the officers should have known was reasonably likely to produce a confession.

Even assuming arguendo that the force was objectively coercive, we hold that the force was not sufficient to overbear the defendant's will. The fact that the statements were not given in response to questioning strongly weighs in favor of finding voluntariness. See Murphy, 763 F.2d at 207. The force was not used in conjunction with questioning, and it was not so great or prolonged as to inflict severe injury or generate fear

sufficient to overcome defendant's will. Cf. Murphy, 763 F.2d at 204 (severe dog bites); Brown, 557 F.2d at 553 ("extensive" injuries to defendant's face, etc.). Defendant's ability to maintain his resolve against giving a written statement also weighs in favor of finding that his statements were voluntarily made. See Dutton, 863 F.2d at 460. Moreover, the assertions that fear overcame defendant's will are suspect since defendant repeated his incriminating statements when he and Ms. Bowens were in the relative safety of the police station far away from the scene of the alleged "violent arrest."

B. Sentencing

The parties agree that the district court's factual findings underlying sentencing must be supported by a preponderance of the evidence, see United States v. Walton, 908 F.2d 1289, 1301 (6th Cir.), cert. denied, 111 S. Ct. 530 (1990), and that those findings will not be overturned unless they are clearly erroneous. United States v. Ransbottom, 914 F.2d 743, 747 (6th Cir.), cert. denied, 111 S. Ct. 439 (1990). Defendant, however, argues that there was not a preponderance of evidence to show that he threw the drugs from the vehicle or caused them to be thrown. Defendant argues that his companion's innocence shows only that the "odds" favored the possibility that he threw the drugs or had them thrown. This argument, if

carried to its logical conclusion, would completely undercut the use of circumstantial evidence.

The preponderance of evidence standard only requires that a factual finding be based upon evidence that makes the existence of the fact "more likely than not." Walton, 908 F.2d at 1302. Given that it is clear that the drugs were the defendant's and that he was willing to engage in a high-speed flight from the police to avoid being caught, it is more probable than not that defendant threw his drugs from the window or caused them to be thrown. Thus, the district court's finding in this regard is supported by the preponderance of the evidence and is not clearly erroneous.

Defendant's next argument is that even if he did throw the drugs from the window, this act does not rise to the level of obstruction of justice for the purpose of enhancing his sentence under section 3C1.1 of the guidelines. The version of section 3C1.1 in effect at the time of defendant's sentencing provides, in relevant part:

> If the defendant willfully impeded or obstructed, or attempted to impede or obstruct the administration of justice during the investigation or prosecution of the instant offense, increase the offense level by 2 levels.

Application notes to that section state that "destroying or concealing material evidence, or . . . directing or

procuring another person to destroy or conceal material evidence, or attempting to do so," may provide a basis for the enhancement.

Defendant relies heavily upon a November 1990 amendment to section 3C1.1 which he contends shows the enhancement was not intended to apply to conduct such as his. We are not persuaded by defendant's reliance upon the post-sentencing amendments. This case involves more than flight alone; it involves an attempt to dispose of drugs during the context of a high-speed chase. It is not at all clear that enhancement would be improper with this combination of factors even under the amended version. See United States v. Hagan, 913 F.2d 1278 (7th Cir. 1990) (pre-amendment case recognizing that mere flight from arrest was insufficient for enhancement but was sufficient when combined with other obstructive behavior); Id. at 1284 n.6 (noting that under amended version high-speed flight can justify enhancement for reckless endangerment).

At any rate, under the guidelines "in effect on the date the defendant [was] sentenced," 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(4), defendant's attempt to dispose of the drugs (by his own actions or by directing another) in combination with the high-speed chase was sufficient to invoke the enhancement. See, e.g., United States v. Jackson, No. 90-1609 (6th Cir. Feb. 1, 1991) (unpublished opinion) (attempt

to throw bags of cocaine into the toilet as police entered home); United States v. Dortch, 923 F.2d 629 (8th Cir. 1991) (tossing cocaine out the window of a vehicle without an attempt to flee); United States v. Galvan-Garcia, 872 F.2d 638, 641 (5th Cir.) (tossing bags of drugs out of window of vehicle during high-speed chase), cert. denied, 110 S. Ct. 164 (1989). Accordingly, we find no error in the enhancement of defendant's sentence for obstruction of justice.

III.

For the reasons stated, the judgment of the district court is AFFIRMED.

A TRUE COPY
Attest:
LEONARD GREEN, Clerk
By _____
Deputy Clerk

ISSUED AS MANDATE: April 15, 1991
COSTS: None

PUBLISHER'S NO

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1991 U.S. App. LEXIS 1757 printed in FULL format.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. JAMES JACKSON, Defendant-Appellant

No. 90-1609

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

1991 U.S. App. LEXIS 1757

February 1, 1991, Filed

)TICE: [*1]

)T RECOMMENDED FOR FULL-TEXT PUBLICATION SIXTH CIRCUIT RULE 24 LIMITS CITATION) SPECIFIC SITUATIONS. PLEASE SEE RULE 24 BEFORE CITING IN A PROCEEDING IN A)URT IN THE SIXTH CIRCUIT. IF CITED, A COPY MUST BE SERVED ON OTHER PARTIES AND 4E COURT. THIS NOTICE IS TO BE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED IF THIS DECISION IS :PRODUCED.

JBSEQUENT HISTORY: Reported as Table Case at 924 F.2d 1059, 1991 U.S. App. :XIS 6499.

?IOR HISTORY:

) Appeal from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of ichigan; No. 89-80433; Hackett, Judge.

JDGES: Nelson and Ryan, Circuit Judges; and Edwards, Senior Circuit Judge.

?INIONBY: RYAN

?INION: Defendant-appellant James Jackson appeals from his conviction of ossession of cocaine and heroin with intent to distribute, 21 U.S.C. @ 841, and ossession or use of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime, 18 U.S.C. @ 24(c). He also appeals his sentence of 211 months imprisonment. The following ssues are before us on appeal:

. Whether the district court properly found that sufficient probable cause ustified the search of Jackson's residence and that the affidavit did not ontain false information;

. Whether the district court erred in its instruction to the jury on the charge f possession of a firearm in connection with a narcotics crime;

. Whether the district [*2] court erred in sentencing Jackson on the basis f possession with intent to distribute in excess of 50 grams of cocaine base;

. Whether the district court erred in adding two points under the sentencing uidelines for obstruction of justice; and

. Whether the prosecutor's comments during closing arguments resulted in anifest injustice and thus warrant reversal.

:

TION IS NOT CONTINUOUS.

We conclude that the district court properly decided all of the issues and hus affirm.

I.

On June 21, 1989, agents of the Drug Enforcement Agency and officers of the etroit Police Department conducted a search warrant raid at Jackson's home in etroit. When the police entered, Jackson tried to throw several plastic bags oward an open toilet but missed his target. The officers arrested Jackson and eized the plastic bags and their contents as evidence. The police then searched he rest of the house where they found a number of plastic bags containing an ff-white substance, packaging materials, razor blades, and rubber bands in the asement and small coin envelopes containing a white substance in the hall loset. The agents also discovered ammunition and a number of weapons throughout he house: an inoperable handgun [*3] in the basement tool chest, two pistols n the upstairs bedroom, two unloaded pistols behind the bed, and a emi-automatic rifle and a twelve gage shotgun in the bedroom closet.

Jackson was charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine and eroin in counts I and II of the indictment, and possession of a firearm in elation to a drug offense in count III.

Jackson filed a motion to suppress the drugs and arms found during the search nd, on January 26, 1990, the court held an evidentiary hearing on this motion. he defense argued that the evidence should be suppressed because the search arrant affiant, Officer Gerard Biernacki, presented false information in the arrant and because the warrant did not establish probable cause to search. The ourt denied the motion, finding that although there was some discrepancy in the estimony, the affidavit's information was accurate.

At trial, expert testimony revealed that the powdery substance found at ackson's house was 51.47 grams of 87% cocaine base, commonly known as crack, nd that the substance found in the basement was .32 grams of crack cocaine. The mall coin envelopes found in the hall closet contained 1.86 grams of heroin. [*4]

The jury convicted Jackson on all three counts. Because the total net weight f the cocaine exceeded 50 grams of cocaine base, the district court sentenced ackson pursuant to the mandatory ten-year minimum of 18 U.S.C. @ 841(b)(iii). he court also adjusted the sentence two points upward under sentencing uideline @ 3C1.1 for obstruction of justice because Jackson had tried to estroy evidence. Jackson was sentenced to 211 months imprisonment.

II.

A. Warrant

Jackson asks the Sixth Circuit to reverse the district court's holding that he affidavit supporting the search warrant did not contain deliberately false information and that sufficient probable cause existed to issue the warrant. In eviewing this contention, the Sixth Circuit must uphold the district court nless its findings were clearly erroneous. United States v. Barone, 584 F.2d 118, 122 (6th Cir. 1978), cert. denied, 439 U.S. 1115 (1979).

The warrant to search Jackson's home was based on the affidavit of Officer erard Biernacki and the statement of a confidential informant, Reginald dwards, who Biernacki interviewed on June 10. Edwards gave the following ·itten statement:

. What were you doing in the car [*5] w/the 3/B/M's at I-75 Serv. Dr. + akman?

. They were taking me back to my Mom's house after they beat me up and cut me) because they said I stole $ 140.00 from their house on Lantz. x Reginald dwards.

. What time and date did the beating and cutting start?

. 4:30 a.m. today, 6-10-89, at my auntie's house on Hershey, they put a gun to / head, Andre had the gun and they told my aunt to to leave the house x eginald Edwards.

. After they beat/cut you up what happened?

. After "Dural" the guy w/the baseball hat on and the driver of the Blk T-Bird, ook me over to a house by 7 Mile & Southfield, near a Kentucky Fried Chicken, nd he picked up the other two guys The guy w/the baseball cap put 3 guns in the ar He got the guns from the house on Lantz Street, he sells dope there too. And know his other houses too x Reginald.

. You have been advised of your rights and make this statement freely?

. Yes I have x Reginald Edwards.

At the suppression hearing, Biernacki testified that Edwards' statement was nterrupted by the arrival of Emergency Medical Service (EMS) technicians to ·eat Edwards. After EMS left, Biernacki spoke further with Edwards but did not ecord [*6] the statement. Edwards' oral statement forms the basis for most f the affidavit's information. Biernacki made the following affidavit on June), 1989:

n June 8, 1989, Sgt. Arthur McNamara and his crew, from the Detroit Police epartment Narcotics Section, executed a Search Warrant for the premises of 480 antz, which is located in City of Detroit Michigan. At this time a small amount f suspected crack cocaine was seized from the premises.

n June 10, 1989, your affiant met with a confidential informant (CI-1) [later dentified as Edwards] who advised the affiant that 480 Lantz was a "Crack ouse" where some of the local people who sell narcotics in the area of Seven ile and Woodward, Detroit Michigan, go and hide from the police. The CI-1 also dvised the affiant that a grey K-car was being used to transport the narcotics ·om a [sic] unknown location on the west side of the city, which the CI-1 could oint out as he had been taken there on June 10, 1989, where he observed a erson known to him as Durell take a briefcase with narcotics proceeds, U.S. urrency, into that location.

n June 13, 1989 the affiant with other members of the task force were in the

ea of 480 Lantz [*7] and at this time observed a grey K-car 1989 Michigan c. #291 XYR parked in front of 480 Lantz and the vehicle was occupied by a ic] unknown Black/Female. Affiant and crew then followed the K-car 291 XYR to 313 Mark Twain Detroit, Michigan, where the driver was observed to exit and ter 19133 [sic] Mark Tawin.

June 13, 1989, affiant met with CI-1 at which time placed the CI-1 in a [sic] dercover vehicle and asked the CI-1 to show affiant where the west side cation was located.

e CI-1 then directed the affiant directly to the 19313 Mark Twain address and ter seeing the K-car 291 XYR parked in the drive stated to affiant that it was e car that the CI-1 had referred to on June 10, 1989.

June 13, 1989 a search warrant for the premises of 19199 Hershey, Detroit chigan was obtained from information provided by CI-1 and 2 persons were rested as a result of this information. This search warrant was obtained by . William Presley of the Detroit Police Department, Homicide Section.

June 18, 1989, Police Officer Allan Smith of the Detroit Police Department, micide Section, with a crew, set up a surveillance of 19313 Mark Twain. On is date the crew observed [*8] a [sic] unknown black female enter the K-car 1 XYR, and proceed directly to 480 Lantz, where the black female entered for a ort period of time and then exit and return directly to 19313 Mark Twain and tered from view.

June 19, 1989 Sgt. Arthur McNamara and crew set up a surveillance of 19313 rk Twain where he observed a [sic] unknown black female and two black males it 19313 Mark Twain and enter the K-car 291 XYR, and again drive directly to 0 Lantz where the black female exited same and entered the Lantz address, for short period of time and again exit and re-enter the K-car. They then drove to address on East State Fair, where the black female then again exited the car d also entered that address from view. After a short period of time she exited e house and entered the K-car and drove directly back to 19313 Mark Twain ere all persons then exited and re-entered the house from view.

fiant's knowledge of the narcotics trade indicates that weapons and/or plosives or incendiary devices are commonly used in connection therewith: that nies or other assets derived from the trade are often found at the sites of rcotics related search warrants executions; [*9] and that records relating narcotics transactions or hiding of proceeds from such transactions are mmonly kept in the course of illegal drug trafficking, and likewise frequently und at the sites of search warrant executions.

At the suppression hearing, the defense challenged the affidavit because of e discrepancies between the written statement and the affidavit, particularly e information set forth in the second paragraph of Biernacki's affidavit. The stimony of Edwards failed to corroborate the exact times and dates involved: wards also did not recall giving an oral statement to Biernacki or giving him e address on Lantz. The defense also offered the testimony of Basim El-Amin o claimed that the car observed by police was Jackson's Chrysler LeBaron, but ckson had loaned it to him on the days in question and that Basim had neither aned the car to anyone nor driven it to the surveillance location himself. The stimony at the hearing failed to establish whose car it was and whether the cense plates on the car at the time were those involved in the offense. The

efense, then, failed to link the Chrysler LeBaron to the car observed by the urveillance team.

The [*10] court denied the motion to suppress. The court found that the iscrepancies between Biernacki's and Edwards' memories could be attributable to ie severe injuries which Edwards had sustained that night. The court also noted iat Edwards did not deny telling Biernacki the information in the affidavit; he imply disputed the time.

Although there were discrepancies in the testimony, we cannot say the court early erred. The court had the opportunity to observe the witnesses' demeanor. though the court does not specifically say that she based her decision on edibility determinations, she must have believed Officer Biernacki and her termination, based on actually hearing and viewing his testimony, should not set aside lightly. 18 U.S.C. @ 3742(e).

The defense also argues that the court erred by applying the wrong standard. ie court, in ruling from the bench, commented that the defense had not met its ieavy burden". The defense believes that the court, by referring to a "heavy irden", applied the clear and convincing evidence standard, not the eponderance of the evidence standard appropriate to these cases. See United ates v. Bennett, 905 F.2d 931 (6th Cir. 1990). The [*11] court, however, pressly stated that it was using the preponderance of the evidence standard. reover, in Bennett, the Sixth Circuit, in commenting on the defendant's burden challenging the truthfulness of a search warrant affidavit, noted that the fendant in such a case "has a heavy burden". Id. at 934. In light of this cent statement by our circuit, it does not seem that the lower court erred in lling the burden a heavy one.

The defendant also challenges the court's decision because the affidavit did t provide the police with probable cause to search. A magistrate's probable use finding must be based on the "totality of the circumstances" surrounding ie affidavit. Illinois v. Gates, 462 U.S. 213 (1983). As the court explained in ates:

ie task of the issuing magistrate is simply to make a practical, common sense cision whether, given all the circumstances set forth in the affidavit before m, including the "veracity" and "basis of knowledge" of persons supplying earsay information, there is a fair probability that contraband or evidence ll be found in a particular place. And the duty of the reviewing court is mply to insure that the magistrate [*12] had a "substantial basis for ncluding" that probable cause existed.

. at 238-39. The magistrate's determination of probable cause "should be paid eat deference by reviewing courts." Id. at 236 (quoting Spinelli v. United ates, 393 U.S. 410, 419 (1969)). Subjecting the magistrate's finding to ypertechnical" examination would violate the strong public policy favoring earches pursuant to a warrant; invalidating the warrant on hypertechnical ounds would discourage officers from obtaining warrants before searching. Id.

Having found that the statements in the affidavit were not intentionally sleading nor untruthful, the district court could easily conclude that the agistrate had a "substantial basis for concluding" that probable cause existed. order to establish probable cause, the affidavit must link the residence to searched with the evidence sought. United States v. Freeman, 685 F.2d 942

5th Cir. 1982). In this case, the affidavit indicated that drug activities had ccurred in the house and that a search should produce drugs, arms and the roceeds of drug sales. The totality of the circumstances indicate that the ffidavit established probable [*13] cause. Unlike the anonymous tip in ates, Biernacki spoke with his informant personally and learned that Edwards new about the activities at Jackson's home from personal observation. Edwards' eliability was also proven by the prior arrests of two others based on his nformation about drug activities. The Court in Gates expressly noted that an nformant's prior reliable information about a particular type of crime in the ommunity diminished the need for a thorough basis of knowledge. Id. at 233. The olice department's surveillance also lent credibility to Edwards' information y confirming the suspicious activities of the gray K-car which travelled epeatedly between a known "crack house" and the defendant's home. Such orroboration also decreases the need to rely on the informant's credibility in aking a common sense probable cause determination. Id. at 244. Although the weeping generalization at the end of the affidavit that weapons are usually ound where drug trafficking occurs may not provide the necessary link between he house and the contraband, the officers' observations and Edwards' statement uffice to show that drug trafficking was occurring at Jackson's [*14] home nd that a search would produce drugs and drug proceeds.

Finally, the defendant asserts that the good faith exception of United States . Leon, 468 U.S. 897 (1984), should not be used to validate the search as the agistrate abandoned his detached and neutral role in making the probable cause inding and because no reasonable police officer could have believed that they ad probable cause to search. Having found that probable cause existed, we need ot reach this issue.

B. Firearm Charge

Jackson was convicted under 18 U.S.C. @ 924(c)(1) which provides: "Whoever, uring and in relation to any crime of violence or drug trafficking crime, . . . ses or carries a firearm, shall, in addition to the punishment provided for uch crime of violence or drug trafficking crime, be sentenced to imprisonment or five years. . . ." 18 U.S.C. @ 924(c)(1). The relevant count of the ndictment charged that Jackson: ". . . during and in relation to a drug rafficking crime, that is, possession with intent to distribute controlled ubstances, used and possessed firearms; in violation of Section 924(d), Title 8, United States Code." In the jury instructions, the district court described *15] the proof necessary for a conviction under this statute:

That the individual was involved in the distribution of a controlled ubstance.

That he knowingly used a firearm in order to protect the controlled ubstance.

For the offense charged in Count Three, the defendant is considered to have sed a firearm if its presence in his possession in any manner facilitated the arrying out of the offense charged in count one or Count Two (sic), possession ith intent to distribute controlled substances.

It is not necessary that the firearms be displayed or fired in order that it ay be considered as having been used.

The defendant has used a firearm if it was an integral part of the criminal ndertaking and its availability increased the likelihood that the criminal ndertaking would succeed.

If a firearm is available to protect controlled substances, then it is used n a drug trafficking crime.

ackson challenges his conviction on this count because the court erred by mproperly amending the indictment by its instruction to the jury and by pplying the "drug fortress theory" when the weapons were not readily accessible o9 use during the crime. The prosecution contends that the indictment [*16] nd the jury instructions conform with this circuit's decisions adopting the drug fortress theory."

The district court's jury instructions did not completely replicate the ndictment: the indictment required that Jackson "use and possess" (emphasis dded) the firearm but the jury instructions did not require both use and ossession. Jackson argues that this change amounts to a constructive amendment o the indictment. The government argues that this difference is only a ariance. A constructive amendment occurs when the variance "creates 'a ubstantial likelihood' that a defendant may have been 'convicted of an offense ther than that charged by the grand jury.'" United States v. Hathaway, 798 F.2d 02, 911 (6th Cir. 1986) (citation omitted). No such danger occurred here ecause the grand jury indictment specifically indicated that count three mounts to a violation of section 924(c) which requires only use or possession. he district judge's instructions also explained that use or possession suffice. hat occurred here looks more like a variance: the charging terms were not hanged but the evidence at trial proved facts which differed materially from hose alleged in the [*17] indictment. Id. at 910. Because this change mounts to a variance, reversible error occurs only when the defendant shows hat the change affected "substantial rights". Id. at 910-11. As Jackson made no uch showing, the conviction should not fall on account of the difference etween the indictment and the instructions.

Jackson also contends that he should not have been convicted under section 24(c) because although guns were in the house, the only gun he had access to uring the offense was the inoperable gun in the basement; he alleges that the un fortress theory should not apply where the firearms are not accessible uring the crime. In making this argument, Jackson cites United States v. eliz-Cordero, 859 F.2d 250 (2d Cir. 1988) and United States v. Theodoropoulos, 66 F.2d 587 (3rd Cir. 1989). In Feliz-Cordero and Theodoropoulos, the Second nd Third Circuits held that the "in relation to" language of section 924(c) equires more than "mere availability": the circumstances must suggest that the efendant intend to and be able to use the firearm during the offense. This, owever, has not been the law of the Sixth Circuit. Our circuit, in 1989, xpressly [*18] adopted the fortress theory which provides that a defendant ay be convicted under section 924(c) when he keeps weapons in the house but oes not use or carry them at the time of the offense because "just as weapons re kept at the ready to protect military installations against potential enemy ttack, so too may weapons be kept at the ready to protect a drug house, thereby afeguarding and facilitating illegal transactions." United States v. costa-Cazares, 878 F.2d 945, 951-52 (6th Cir.), cert. denied, 110 S. Ct. 255 1989) (citation omitted); see also United States v. Henry, 878 F.2d 937 (6th ir. 1989). As our circuit recently endorsed the fortress theory, we should ffirm the conviction under section 924(c).

C. Application of 21 U.S.C. @ 841(b)(1)(A)(iii)

In sentencing Jackson, the district court imposed a minimum sentence of ten ears pursuant to 21 U.S.C. @ 841(b)(1)(A)(iii). This section provides that a erson convicted of possession with intent to distribute under section 841(a) ust be sentenced to a minimum of ten years where the violation involves "50 ·ams or more of a mixture or substance which described in clause (ii) contains ocaine base." 21 U.S.C. [*19] @ 841(b)(1)(A)(iii). Clause ii requires a etectable amount of various forms of cocoa leaves, cocaine, and their erivatives. Jackson argues that the district court erred in applying the enalty provision because the total net weight of cocaine seized was under 50 ·ams. The prosecution argues that the district court did not err because the tatute does not require that the 50 grams of cocaine base represent 100% urity.

The mandatory penalty provision of section 841(b) "does not require the iolation to involve 50 grams of cocaine base; rather it applies to '50 grams of mixture or substance [of cocaine] which contains cocaine base.'" United States . Barnes, 890 F.2d 545, 552 (1st Cir. 1989), cert. denied, 110 S. Ct. 1326 1990). Although, as Jackson points out, the evidence involved in Barnes, 72.5 ·ams of 97% pure cocaine base, would meet the requirement of 50 grams of pure ocaine base, the court expressly held that it need not meet this requirement or it to impose the penalty provision. This circuit came to a similar onclusion in a case dealing with LSD. In United States v. Elrod, the Sixth ircuit expressly rejected the purity argument advanced here by defendant *20] Jackson. United States v. Elrod, 898 F.2d 60 (6th Cir.), cert. denied, 11 S. Ct. 104 (1990). In Elrod, the court found that the 10 gram requirement or LSD was met where the defendant possessed .09 grams of pure LSD and 10 grams f blotter paper. The court explained that the statute's wording "mixture or ubstance containing a detectable amount" of LSD, See 21 U.S.C. @ 41(b)(1)(A)(v), indicates that the full 10 grams need not be composed of pure SD. This conclusion was bolstered by contrasting the LSD section with the PCP rovision which expressly created a net weight requirement of pure PCP. As ongress clearly knew how to write such a provision, the Sixth Circuit concluded hat they did not intend to mandate such a net weight requirement for LSD. lrod, 898 F.2d at 62. Because the same language is involved in the cocaine base ection as the LSD section, we hold that the penalty provision of section 841(b)(1)(A)(iii) applies regardless of whether the 50 grams involved onstitute pure cocaine base.

D. Obstruction of Justice

The district court increased Jackson's offense level by two points because he bstructed justice when he attempted to throw bags of [*21] cocaine into the oilet as the police entered his home. Jackson disagrees with this enhancement ecause the allegedly obstructive conduct occurred contemporaneously with the rrest. The prosecution argues that under the Guidelines in effect at the time f sentencing, the contemporaneous occurrence of the arrest and obstruction is rrelevant.

The Sentencing Guidelines provide a two point offense level enhancement for efendants who "willfully impeded or obstructed, or attempted to impede or bstruct the administration of justice during the investigation or prosecution f the instant offense." U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1. An example of such conduct listed in he Application Notes is "destroying or concealing material evidence, or

ittempting to do so." Application Notes 1(a), U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1.

Jackson argues that the Amendments which became effective November 1990 support his contention. Amendment 41(3)(d) provides that "if such (obstructive) onduct occurs contemporaneously with arrest . . . it shall not, standing alone, e sufficient to warrant an adjustment for obstruction unless it results in a aterial hindrance to the official investigation or prosecution of the instant ffense or the sentencing [*22] of the offender." The Sentencing Guidelines n effect when Jackson was sentenced, however, do not include the amendment Jackson quotes. Because no material hindrance occurred when the agents had to alk a few extra feet to retrieve the bags, Jackson argues that the obstructive onduct occurring at the time of arrest does not warrant the increased sentence.

Under the then current provision, obstruction of justice includes conduct luring the investigation which ought to include the events leading up to the rrest. The Fifth Circuit agreed with this approach in a factually similar case. n United States v. Galvan-Garcia, the court used section 3C1.1 to increase the ffense level of a defendant who threw bags of marijuana out the window during a igh speed chase which culminated in their arrest. United States v. alvan-Garcia, 872 F.2d 638 (5th Cir.), cert. denied, 110 S. Ct. 164 (1989). ecause this rule, and not the exclusion of contemporaneous conduct, was the la t the time of sentencing, the district court did not clearly err.

E. Prosecutor's Comments During Closing Arguments

Jackson complains that certain comments made by the prosecutor during his ebuttal argument [*23] deprived Jackson of due process because of their undamental unfairness. During the closing arguments of Jackson's attorney, Mr. Blank, mentioned that the jury should consider the lesser included offense of imple possession; Mr. Blank also counselled the jury to find Jackson not guilty f all counts. In his rebuttal argument, the prosecutor, Mr. Soisson, in iscussing the unlikelihood of Jackson possessing such a large quantity of ocaine, 200 bags, for personal use, stated that "Mr. Blank's (sic) says well aybe just guilty of simple possession of it --." Transcript at 367. Mr. Blank mmediately objected that he "did not say that. I said that they have other hings to consider. I don't think the prosecution should be saying that I said y client's guilty of --." Id. Mr. Soisson then adopted Mr. Blank's phrase "other things to consider" and continued with his argument. Mr. Soisson took no further action until bringing this argument up on appeal.

Although improper prosecution statements during closing arguments may onstitute reversible error, courts rarely reverse for admittedly improper omments. Angel v. Overberg, 682 F.2d 605, 608 (6th Cir. 1982). In fact, the efense [*24] fails to cite one case when the court actually reversed. Such elief is only appropriate when the misconduct denies the defendant a fair trial y permeating the entire atmosphere of the trial. United States v. Vance, 871 .2d 572, 577 (6th Cir.), cert. denied, 110 S. Ct. 323 (1989). Arguments of rejudice caused by closing arguments must be viewed in the totality of the rial. Donnelly v. De Christoforo, 416 U.S. 637, 645 (1974).

In this case, the prosecutor's remarks could have been interpreted, as the efense contends, as an admission by the defense counsel that Jackson was guilt of simple possession. On the other hand, the jury could have inferred what the rosecution probably intended: that the defense wanted the jury to consider the simple possession charge. When "two plausible interpretations can be given to

prosecutor's ambiguous final argument, the court should not strive to adopt he one which casts doubt upon the prosecutor's intentions." Angel, 682 F.2d at 08. An appellate court also should not reverse when efforts were made by the istrict court to mitigate the harm of the statements. Id.; Donnelly, 416 U.S. t 645. In this case, the closing arguments [*25] were prefaced by a reminder rom the court that they were not evidence and the prosecutor himself opened his rgument with the same reminder. The jury also heard an immediate objection by ne defense counsel and a retraction by the prosecutor of the disputed comment. nus, the jury, after hearing three days worth of arguments and evidence, would e unlikely to focus on the single ambiguous remark which the prosecutor mmediately retracted and the court announced was not evidence. See Donnelly, 16 U.S. 637. Although the defense correctly argues that the prosecutor has a pecial role in criminal trials to ensure that justice is done, we do not elieve that the disputed comment, viewed in the totality of the trial, fficiently prejudiced the defendant to warrant reversal.

III.

For the foregoing reasons, we AFFIRM Jackson's conviction and sentence.

4TH CASE of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. JOHN J. URBANEK, Defendant-Appellant

No. 90-3242

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT

1991 U.S. App. LEXIS 6938

April 23, 1991, Filed

:IOR HISTORY: [*1]

)peal for the United States District Court for the District of Kansas; D.C. No.)-40007-01.

)UNSEL: Lee Thompson, United States Attorney, and Tanya J. Treadway, Assistant ıited States Attorney, Kansas City, Kansas, for Plaintiff-Appellee.

Charles D. Anderson, Federal Public Defender, and Marilyn M. Trubey, ;sistant Federal Public Defender, Topeka, Kansas, for Defendant-Appellant.

JDGES: SEYMOUR, ANDERSON and TACHA, Circuit Judges.

'INIONBY: ANDERSON

'INION: After examining the briefs and appellate record, this panel has etermined unanimously that oral argument would not materially assist the etermination of this appeal. See Fed. R. App. P. 34(a); 10th Cir. R. 34.1.9. ıe cause is therefore ordered submitted without oral argument.

John J. Urbanek appeals his sentence imposed pursuant to the United States entencing Guidelines ("U.S.S.G." or "Guidelines"), contending that the district ourt erred in adding two points to his offense level pursuant to U.S.S.G. @ C1.1 for obstructing the administration of justice.

Mr. Urbanek entered a plea of guilty, and was convicted on five counts of ailure to file an income tax return for the years 1983 through 1987, in iolation of 26 U.S.C. @ 7203. For purposes of [*2] sentencing, only count V, elating to the year 1987, fell under the Guidelines. As to that count the ıited States Probation Officer calculated the adjusted offense level to be ight, computed by establishing a base offense level of eight (U.S.S.G. @ T1.2/total tax loss of $ 18,111), adjusted upward by two levels for obstruction f justice (U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1), and downward two levels for acceptance of esponsibility (U.S.S.G. @ 3E.1.1(a)). The criminal history category was etermined to be III. The resulting sentencing range was six to twelve months, ith options of supervised release or probation, a fine not exceeding $ 10,000. nd a mandatory special assessment of $ 25. Without the two-level increase for bstruction of justice the offense level would have been six, resulting in a uideline range of two to eight months, with provisions relating to supervised elease, probation, fines and assessments being identical to those for an ffense level of eight.

The district court sentenced Mr. Urbanek to five years probation as to counts through IV, none of which were subject to the Guidelines, with that sentence run concurrently with the sentence imposed as to count V. An assessment 3] of $ 25 for each count was also imposed pursuant to 18 U.S.C. @ 3013. As count V, the district court imposed a sentence under the Guidelines of five ars probation subject to special conditions, including a six-month placement the community corrections component of the Topeka Halfway House, rticipation in the 30-day intermediate alcohol treatment program, full operation with the Internal Revenue Service, and payment of restitution. A $ special assessment was also imposed as to count V. Because of Mr. Urbanek's digent financial condition no fine was imposed either for failure to file or r costs of incarceration. The district court characterized this sentence as robably a lenient sentence from the problems that you have caused to other ople." R. Vol. III at 23.

Mr. Urbanek's offense level was increased by two levels for obstruction of stice pursuant to U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1 because of false statements which he made Internal Revenue Service investigators during an interview. The investigators itiated the interview for the purpose of confronting him with information ich the agents had already gleaned from their own investigation of his nancial affairs. In response [*4] to the questions, Mr. Urbanek told the vestigators that he had not worked and had neither income nor a bank account ring the years in which he did not file an income tax return. He also denied ceiving income under a business name or alias. Those statements were false. He d substantial income for the years 1983 through 1987, and bank accounts, and d used aliases or business names. Mr. Urbanek also stated that his failure to mply with the tax laws was attributable to an alcohol abuse problem.

None of the false statements made by Mr. Urbanek to the investigators impeded ie investigation. Prior to the interview with him the IRS investigators knew iat he had worked during the target years, where he had worked, what his income is, his bank account number and location, and the names he had used in his isiness. When confronted with this evidence, in the same interview in which he id made the false statements, Mr. Urbanek immediately retracted those tatements.

Mr. Urbanek argues that his false statements and use of aliases did not iount to obstruction of justice since they were not capable of influencing the ivestigation and were the equivalent of "flight" or a denial of [*5] guilt. ie government responds that a false statement must only have "the potential for istructing justice." Brief of Appellee at 7 (emphasis in original). The overnment adds that: "Because Section 3C1.1 includes attempted obstruction of istice as well as actual obstruction of justice, materiality is not connected whether the authorities' investigation was actually affected or prejudiced." d. (emphasis in original). In evaluating these arguments, we are mindful that ie district court's application of the Sentencing Guidelines to the facts of a rticular case is entitled to due deference and its factual findings will not e reversed unless clearly erroneous. U.S.C. @ 3742(e) (1990); United States v. eys, 899 F.2d 983, 988 (10th Cir.), cert. denied, 111 S.Ct. 160 (1990). owever, we will remand for resentencing if the Guidelines were incorrectly plied. 18 U.S.C. @ 3742(f)(1).

Recently the United States Sentencing Commission has added additional mmentary and Application Notes to @ 3C1.1, in order to clarify the operation the existing Guidelines, rather than to change them. U.S.S.G. App. C, note

7. The Application [*6] Notes state, in pertinent part:

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of the types of conduct to ich this enhancement applies:

* *

) providing a materially false statement to a law enforcement officer that gnificantly obstructed or impeded the official investigation or prosecution of e instant offense;

* *

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of the types of conduct at, absent a separate count of conviction for such conduct, do not warrant plication of this enhancement, but ordinarily can appropriately be sanctioned the determination of the particular sentence within the otherwise applicable ideline range:

) providing a false name or identification document at arrest, except where ch conduct actually resulted in a significant hindrance to the investigation prosecution of the instant offense;

(b) making false statements, not under oath, to law enforcement officers, ıess Application Note 3 (g) above applies;

* *

mmentary, Application Notes 3, 4, U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1 (emphasis added).

Evaluating the statements made by Mr. Urbanek to the investigators in light the Application Notes to @ 3C1.1, n1 we [*7] conclude that it was clear ror to charge him with a two-level increase for obstruction of justice. The atements which he made denying the existence of bank accounts or taxable come amounted to nothing more than a denial of guilt or an "exculpatory no." mmentary, Application Note 1, U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1; United States v. Keys, 899 2d at 988 (denial of guilt is improper basis for @ 3C1.1 enhancement). sertion of an alcohol abuse problem as an excuse for failing to file tax turns was a legitimate defense, subject, of course, to proof.

- Footnotes -

n1 The Commentaries interpret the Guidelines and explain their application. ilure to follow them in applying the Guidelines may constitute reversible ror. U.S.S.G. @ 1B1.7; United States v. Goddard, F.2d (10th Cir. March , 1991); United States v. Smith, 900 F.2d 1442, 1447 (10th Cir. 1990).

- End Footnotes -

Mr. Urbanek's use of aliases to hinder the government in recognizing and tablishing the fact that he earned income, and his denial of [*8] the use aliases, are a more serious matter. Many courts have held that a @ 3C1.1 ancement is justified when the defendant asserts an alias during an vestigation, regardless of whether the prosecution was actually impeded or structed. United States v. Gaddy, 909 F.2d 196, 199 (7th Cir. 1990) (false

me to FBI agent, even though recanted two days later); United States v. abor, 894 F.2d 554, 556 (2d Cir. 1990) (false identification to vestigators); United States v. Patterson, 890 F.2d 69, 71-72 (8th Cir. 1989) alse identification at time of arrest and during investigation); see United ates v. Saintil, 910 F.2d 1231, 1233 (4th Cir. 1990). However, those cases ffer from the one before us in that Mr. Urbanek did not assert that he was yone other than himself to the investigator. He simply denied having used any iases in the past in connection with the crime. As discussed above, that nial of wrongdoing alone is not enough to justify the enhancement. Similarly, s refusal to disclose the names under which he did business is merely a efusal to admit guilt or to provide information" [*9] and is not meant to stify a @ 3C1.1 enhancement for obstruction of justice. Commentary, plication Note 1, U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1.

In addition, those cases were decided without the benefit of the recent arification of the Guidelines. In light of the 1990 Application Notes, even if . Urbanek had given an alias, the enhancement would not be justified since it undisputed that his false statements did not significantly impede or obstruct e investigation. n2 Commentary, Application Note 3 (g), U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1. e IRS investigators already had the correct information in their possession en they asked the questions. Furthermore, Mr. Urbanek recanted on the spot en confronted with the truth. Accordingly, no obstruction of the ministration of justice occurred within the meaning of U.S.S.G. @ 3C1.1 as a sult of Mr. Urbanek's responses to the investigator's questions.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -Footnotes- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

n2 No cases decided after the 1990 clarification conflict with our holding at actual, significant hindrance to investigation is necessary when false iases are given, not under oath, during the investigation. United States v. rpin, 920 F.2d 1377, 1387 (8th Cir. 1990) (defendant's referral to accomplice der his assumed name during trial testimony actually hindered the vestigation); United States v. Yerks, 918 F.2d 1371, 1375 (8th Cir. 1990) here defendant gave an alias at arrest and also signed a financial status fidavit before federal magistrate, actual obstruction not necessary).

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -End Footnotes- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

10]

The government argues that even if the district court erred by increasing the se offense level under @ 3C1.1, the error was harmless and no remand for sentencing is required because Mr. Urbanek's sentence would have been the same en if the offense level was calculated at six rather than eight. See United ates v. Bermingham, 855 F.2d 925, 931 (2d Cir. 1988) (dispute about applicable idelines need not be resolved where the sentence falls within either of two guably applicable Guideline ranges and the same sentence would have been posed under either guideline range); United States v. White, 875 F.2d 427, 32-33 (4th Cir. 1989) ("Had the district judge stated that the sentence would ve been the same regardless of which sentencing range had ultimately been termined to be appropriate, review of whether [the adjustment] applied would ve been unnecessary."). However, the government concedes that the district rt did not specifically state that Mr. Urbanek's sentence would have been the e with or without the obstruction of justice adjustment. Brief of Appellee at .. While we view it as highly unlikely that this "lenient" sentence [*11] posed by the district court will be any different under an offense level of

x rather than an offense level of eight, we cannot agree with the government at no remand is required simply because the sentence imposed was within either two arguably applicable Guideline ranges. See United States v. Bermingham, 5 F.2d at 934-35. Unless the district court makes it clear during the ntencing proceeding that the sentence would be the same under either of the plicable Guideline ranges, we are compelled to remand for resentencing when we nd, as we do here, that an improper offense level was applied. Id.

In consideration of the foregoing, we reverse and remand this case for sentencing consistent with this opinion.

ORIGINAL

Nos. 90-8126 and 90-8184

Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED
JUL 29 1991
OFFICE OF THE CLERK

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1991

LEON EARLY, PETITIONER

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN, PETITIONER

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ON PETITIONS FOR WRITS OF CERTIORARI
TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

BRIEF FOR THE UNITED STATES IN OPPOSITION

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QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether the district courts erred in imposing a two-level increase in petitioners' offense levels for obstruction of justice under the version of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1 that was in effect before November 1990.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1991

No. 90-8126

LEON EARLY, PETITIONER

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 90-8184

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN, PETITIONER

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ON PETITIONS FOR WRITS OF CERTIORARI
TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

BRIEF FOR THE UNITED STATES IN OPPOSITION

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the court of appeals in No. 90-8126 (Pet. App. 1-5) is not reported, but the decision is noted at 927 F.2d 605 (Table). The opinion of the court of appeals in No. 90-8184 (Pet. App. 1-12) also is not reported, but the decision is noted at 928 F.2d 1133 (Table).

JURISDICTION

The judgment of the court of appeals in No. 90-8126 was entered on February 27, 1991. A petition for rehearing was denied on April 12, 1991. 90-8126 Pet. App. 6. The petition for a writ of certiorari was filed on May 24, 1991. The judgment of the court of appeals in No. 90-8184 was entered on March 21, 1991. The petition for a writ of certiorari was filed on May 30, 1991. In both cases, the jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. 1254(1).

STATEMENT

1. No. 90-8126. After a jury trial in the United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, petitioner Early was convicted of possessing cocaine base with intent to distribute it, in violation of 21 U.S.C. 841(a)(1). He was sentenced to 110 months' imprisonment, to be followed by a four-year term of supervised release. The court of appeals affirmed. 90-8126 Pet. App. 1-5.

The evidence at Early's trial showed that on January 14, 1989, Memphis, Tennessee, police officers responded to a report that a drug sale was in progress at an apartment complex. Upon reaching the scene, an officer saw Early and two other men standing on a second-story balcony. The officer saw Early hand something to one of the other men, who then handed money to the third man. When Early saw the officers approach, he threw a plastic ziplock bag over the balcony and onto the ground below. After Early was arrested, one of the officers retrieved the bag and discovered that

it contained crack cocaine. 90-8126 Pet. App. 1-2; Gov't C.A. Br. 2-3.

At his sentencing on December 8, 1989, Early argued that his conduct in throwing away the cocaine as the officers approached did not constitute an attempt to obstruct justice under the then-applicable version of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1. At the time of Early's offense and sentencing, Section 3C1.1 provided (Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1 (1989)):

> If the defendant willfully impeded or obstructed, or attempted to impede or obstruct, the administration of justice during the investigation or prosecution of the instant offense, increase the offense level by 2 levels.[1/]

The commentary to Section 3C1.1 stated at that time that Section 3C1.1

> provides a sentence enhancement for a defendant who engages in conduct calculated to mislead or deceive authorities * * * or otherwise to willfully interfere with the disposition of criminal charges, in respect to the instant offense.

Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1, Commentary (1989). In addition, one of the application notes to Section 3C1.1 provided that "destroying or concealing material evidence, or attempting to do so" may provide a basis for applying the Section 3C1.1 adjustment. Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1, Application Note 1(a) (1989).

[1/] Effective November 1, 1990, Section 3C1.1 was amended to provide:

> If the defendant willfully obstructed or impeded, or attempted to obstruct or impede, the administration of justice during the investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of the instant offense, increase the offense level by 2 levels.

See Sentencing Guidelines App. C, amend. 347, at C.189 (1990).

Relying on those provisions, the district court imposed a two-level increase for obstruction of justice. 90-8126 C.A. App. 153-154.

The court of appeals affirmed. 90-8126 Pet. App. 1-5. The court rejected Early's contention that his act of throwing away the cocaine was not willful but rather was like spontaneous flight, which some courts have held does not constitute obstruction of justice. The court concluded that "under some circumstances, the act of throwing evidence can amount to a willful attempt to conceal the evidence," while "[u]nder other circumstances, it might not." Id. at 3. Here, the court observed, Early did more than "merely drop the bag at his feet." Ibid.

The court of appeals noted that the district court's finding that Early's actions constituted a willful attempt to conceal evidence is subject to reversal on appeal only if it was clearly erroneous. Under the evidence before the district court, the court of appeals concluded, "it was not error for the district judge to conclude that the defendant threw the bag of cocaine from the balcony in a calculated and willful attempt to conceal it from the police." 90-8126 Pet. App. 4.

After the court of appeals rendered its decision, Early filed a petition for rehearing contending for the first time that under a November 1990 amendment to the application notes to Section 3C1.1, his conduct would not constitute obstruction of justice within the meaning of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1. See 90-8126 Pet. 5-6. The amendment -- which took effect in November 1990,

after petitioner was sentenced -- states that the enhancement generally applies to

> destroying or concealing * * * evidence that is material to an official investigation or judicial proceeding * * *, or attempting to do so; however, if such conduct occurred contemporaneously with arrest (e.g., attempting to swallow or throw away a controlled substance), it shall not, standing alone, be sufficient to warrant an adjustment for obstruction unless it resulted in a material hindrance to the official investigation or prosecution of the instant offense or the sentencing of the offender.

Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1, Application Note 3(d) (1990). The court of appeals denied the petition for rehearing. 90-8126 Pet. App. 6.

2. No. 90-8184. After a jury trial in the United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, petitioner Coleman was convicted on one count of possessing cocaine base with intent to distribute it and one count of possessing cocaine with intent to distribute it, in violation of 21 U.S.C. 841(a)(1). He was sentenced to 78 months' imprisonment, to be followed by a four-year term of supervised release. The court of appeals affirmed. 90-8184 Pet. App. 1-12.

On November 22, 1989, Memphis police officers made a controlled purchase of cocaine from Coleman through an informant. The officers then telephoned Coleman's motel room and told him that the police were on their way to his room. Coleman and a woman companion fled the room, got into a car, and led the police on a high-speed chase. During the chase, a yellow bag was thrown out the window of Coleman's car. After Coleman was stopped and arrested, the police retrieved the yellow bag, which contained

cocaine. Coleman acknowledged responsibility for the bag. 90-8184 Pet. App. 2-3; Gov't C.A. Br. 3-5.

At Coleman's sentencing in July 1990, the district court imposed a two-level increase under Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1 because Coleman threw the bag of drugs from the car or caused it to be thrown. The court noted that while flight alone is not enough to warrant an enhancement for obstruction of justice, the enhancement was appropriate in this case because Coleman fled by driving his car at a high rate of speed and attempted to dispose of the drugs during the high-speed chase. 90-8184 Pet. App. 4-5.

On appeal, Coleman renewed his contention that throwing the drugs from the car did not constitute obstruction of justice under Section 3C1.1. He relied on the November 1990 amendment to the application notes to Section 3C1.1, even though that amendment was not in effect at the time of his offense or his sentencing.[2/]

The court of appeals affirmed. 90-8184 Pet. App. 1-12. The court noted that "[t]his case involves more than flight alone; it involves an attempt to dispose of drugs during the context of a high-speed chase." Id. at 11. For that reason, the court concluded, Coleman's conduct might well qualify for a two-point obstruction of justice enhancement even under the November 1990 version of Section 3C1.1 and its commentary. Ibid. (citing United States v. Hagan, 913 F.2d 1278 (7th Cir. 1990)). In any event, the

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[2/] Coleman also argued that there was insufficient evidence to show that he threw the bag or ordered it to be thrown. The court of appeals rejected that contention, 90-8184 Pet. App. 9-10, and Coleman does not renew it here.

court held that under the version of Section 3B1.1 and its commentary that were in effect at the time Coleman was sentenced, his "attempt to dispose of his drugs (by his own actions or by directing another) in combination with the high-speed chase was sufficient to invoke the enhancement." 90-8184 Pet. App. 11.

ARGUMENT

Petitioners acknowledge (90-8126 Pet. 6; 90-8184 Pet. 6-7) that the pre-1990 version of the commentary to Section 3C1.1, which was in effect at the time they committed their offenses and were sentenced, provided that a two-point enhancement was appropriate whenever a defendant "destroy[ed] or conceal[ed] material evidence * * * or attempt[ed] to do so." Petitioners do not dispute that that language plainly covers cases in which a suspect attempts to conceal or destroy evidence at the time of his arrest. Petitioners contend, however (90-8126 Pet. 6-10; 90-8184 Pet. 6-11), that in light of the subsequent revision of the commentary to Section 3C1.1 in November 1990, their conduct cannot be regarded as obstruction of justice within the meaning of Section 3C1.1, and that their sentences were therefore unlawful.

1. The courts of appeals are in agreement that, although sentencing courts are not bound by amendments to the commentary to the Sentencing Guidelines that have not taken effect at the time of the offense, the courts may consider such amendments if they reflect the Commission's view of what a particular pre-amendment Guideline was intended to mean. Some courts have extended that principle to permit appellate courts to give weight to clarifying

amendments that took effect only after the date of sentencing. See, e.g., United States v. Fiala, 929 F.2d 285, 290 (7th Cir. 1991); United States v. Nissen, 928 F.2d 690, 694-695 (5th Cir. 1991); United States v. Perdomo, 927 F.2d 111, 117 (2d Cir. 1991).

That principle applies, however, only if the change in the commentary simply "clarif[ies] a meaning that was fairly to be drawn from the original version." United States v. Guerrero, 863 F.2d 245, 250 (2d Cir. 1988). Where the effect of a change made by the Commission is to alter the meaning that would naturally be given to the version of the Guidelines in force at the time of sentencing, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to treat the later version as controlling. See 18 U.S.C. 3553(a)(4) (defendants are to be sentenced according to Guidelines in effect at the time of sentencing). If the rule were otherwise, a judgment that was correct at the time it was entered could be upset on appeal as a result of a change in the Guidelines that had not been adopted or even proposed at the time of sentencing. The purpose of the rule permitting courts to seek guidance from later pronouncements of the Sentencing Commission is to ensure that the sentencing court correctly applies the Guidelines in effect at the time; the rule is not designed to authorize a reviewing court to alter a sentence that was correct at the time it was imposed, simply because the Guidelines were revised at some later time in a manner favorable to the defendant.[3/]

[3/] There are specific provisions for reducing a defendant's term of imprisonment where the Guideline range applicable to the (continued...)

Under the version of Section 3C1.1 and its commentary in effect at the time petitioners were sentenced, it was reasonably clear that an attempt to conceal or destroy evidence during an investigation would justify a two-point enhancement for obstruction of justice. Section 3C1.1 referred to willful efforts to obstruct justice during an investigation, the accompanying commentary provided that the conduct had to be "calculated to mislead or deceive authorities," and Application Note 1(a) in the commentary provided that the adjustment could be applied for the conduct of "destroying or concealing material evidence, or attempting to do so." Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1, Commentary & Application Note 1(a) (1989). As the courts of appeals that have addressed the issue have uniformly held, that description clearly fits the scenario of a defendant who seeks to conceal or dispose of evidence at the time of an encounter with the police. See United States v. Dortch, 923 F.2d 629, 632 (8th Cir. 1991); United States v. Baker, 907 F.2d 53, 55 (8th Cir. 1990); United States v. Cain, 881 F.2d 980, 982 (11th Cir. 1989); United States v. Galvan-Garcia, 872 F.2d 638, 641 (5th Cir.), cert. denied, 110 S. Ct. 164 (1989).

The November 1990 revision to the commentary to Section 3C1.1, and in particular the new Application Note 3(d), changed the rule with respect to attempts to destroy or conceal evidence at the time of arrest. The new application note stated that conduct such as

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[3/](...continued)
defendant has been lowered as a result of an amendment to the Guidelines, where such a reduction is consistent with policy statements issued by the Sentencing Commission. See 18 U.S.C. 3582(c)(2); Sentencing Guidelines § 1B1.10 (1990).

"attempting to swallow or throw away a controlled substance" at the time of arrest "shall not, standing alone, be sufficient to warrant an adjustment" unless it resulted in a material hindrance to the investigation. Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1, Application Note 3(d) (1990). In light of the clear change in the governing rule for this kind of conduct, it is not accurate to describe Application Note 3(d) as simply clarifying "a meaning that was fairly to be drawn from the original version," United States v. Guerrero, 863 F.2d at 250. The court of appeals was therefore correct in looking to the version of Section 3C1.1 that was in effect at the time of petitioners' sentencing proceedings rather than the later-adopted version of Section 3C1.1 and its commentary.

Although petitioners assert the existence of a conflict among the circuits on this issue, no circuit has held that the November 1990 revision of Section 3C1.1 that added Application Note 3(d) to the commentary must be applied to sentencing proceedings that took place prior to the effective date of that revision. In fact, the only other court of appeals that has addressed the issue has held that the November 1990 revision to Application Note 3(d) should not be applied retroactively. See United States v. Dortch, 923 F.2d at 632 n.2. It is true that courts have relied on other parts of the November 1990 revision to Section 3C1.1 in construing the prior version of that Guideline. In the case of those other portions of the 1990 revision, however, the Commission's revision clearly had the effect of confirming an interpretation that was already apparent from the language of the prior Guideline or commentary,

rather than changing the prior rule. See United States v. Urbanek, 930 F.2d 1512 (10th Cir. 1991) (denial of guilt is not conduct that can justify an adjustment for obstruction of justice); United States v. Fiala, 929 F.2d 285, 289-290 (7th Cir. 1991) (same); United States v. Sanchez, 928 F.2d 1450, 1459 (6th Cir. 1991) (avoiding or fleeing from arrest is not obstruction of justice for purposes of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1); United States v. Paige, 923 F.2d 112, 114 (8th Cir. 1991) (same).[4/]

2. In light of these principles, neither petitioner is entitled to relief. Both were found to have intentionally sought to conceal or destroy evidence for the purpose of misleading or deceiving law enforcement authorities during the course of an investigation. Their conduct therefore fell squarely within the reach of the version of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1 that was in effect at the time of their offenses and sentencing proceedings. And in light of the clear change in the rule effected by the November 1990 revision, there is no justification for overriding

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[4/] As petitioners note, the Sentencing Commission stated that its amendment to Section 3C1.1 and the accompanying commentary "clarifies the operation of § 3C1.1." Sentencing Guidelines App. C, amend. 347, at C.189 (1990). The use of the term "clarifies" with respect to the entire detailed revision of Section 3C1.1 does not justify the conclusion that every part of the revision is simply an explicit statement of what was already implicit in the prior language. As we have indicated above, several parts of the November 1990 revision may have that character, but the particular change at issue in this case -- Application Note 3(d) -- did not.

Other cases cited by petitioners deal with different Guidelines altogether and therefore have nothing at all to say about whether the 1990 revision of Section 3C1.1 effected a change in the rule to be applied under that Guideline or was merely a confirmation of a rule that was implicit in the prior version.

the statutory provision that requires defendants to be sentenced pursuant to the version of the Guidelines that is in effect at the time of sentencing. 18 U.S.C. 3553(a)(4).

In addition, special factors make each petitioner's case an unsuitable one for applying the subsequent version of the Guidelines and overturning the district court's Section 3C1.1 enhancement. In petitioner Early's case, his counsel did not argue the applicability of the November 1990 version of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1 at any time before the petition for rehearing, even though the court of appeals did not decide the case until almost four months after the November 1990 version of the Guidelines became effective. Early's failure to raise his present argument before the court of appeals on a timely basis counsels against granting review. Although his default is not jurisdictional, as it would be in a case coming from a state court, see Herndon v. Georgia, 295 U.S. 441, 443 (1935), the absence of a pre-dispositional presentation of the argument raises the question whether the panel would have analyzed the case in the same way if the issue had been properly raised. What is more, because the decisions in both Early's and Coleman's cases are unpublished, those decisions have little if any precedential weight even within the Sixth Circuit. See 6th Cir. R. 24 (citation of unpublished decisions disfavored, except to establish res judicata, estoppel, or law of the case).

In petitioner Coleman's case, moreover, the conduct at issue was more than simple concealment or destruction of evidence. As the court of appeals stated, Coleman attempted to dispose of his

drugs during a high-speed chase, which had the potential of endangering others. 90-8184 Pet. App. 11. For that reason, as the court of appeals noted, Coleman's conduct would likely have constituted obstruction of justice even under the amended commentary to Section 3C1.1. See United States v. Paige, 923 F.2d 112, 114 (8th Cir. 1991) (a car chase to avoid arrest, in which individuals were endangered and evidence thrown out the window, constituted willful obstruction even under the November 1990 version of Section 3C1.1). Coleman's case would therefore not be an appropriate one in which to review the question that petitioner seeks to present, i.e., whether the simple act of disposing of drugs at the time of arrest was subject to a two-point enhancement under the pre-November 1990 version of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1.[2/]

Finally, because the new version of Sentencing Guidelines § 3C1.1 is now in effect and governs all sentencing proceedings held after November 1, 1990, the question presented by the petitions is not one of continuing importance. The issue has not arisen with great frequency in the past, and it is likely to arise with even less frequency in the future, as the number of cases governed by the pre-1990 version of Section 3C1.1 decreases over

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[2/] Even in petitioner Early's case, as the court of appeals pointed out, the conduct was more aggravated than a defendant's act of simply dropping a controlled substance to dissociate himself from the evidence; Early threw the drugs off an apartment balcony and onto the ground below, not only to dissociate himself from them but, inferably, to conceal the drugs altogether from discovery by the police. See 90-8126 Pet. App. 3.

time. Further review of this issue, on which there is no conflict among the circuits, is therefore unwarranted.

CONCLUSION

The petitions for writs of certiorari should be denied.

Respectfully submitted.

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JULY 1991

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Nos. 90–8126 AND 90–8184

LEON EARLY

90–8126 *v.*

UNITED STATES

BILLY WAYNE COLEMAN

90–8184 *v.*

UNITED STATES

ON PETITIONS FOR WRITS OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

[October 15, 1991]

The petitions for writs of certiorari are denied.

JUSTICE WHITE, dissenting.

The question in these cases is whether an amendment to the Commentary to the United States Sentencing Guidelines should govern a sentencing which occurred prior to the effective date of the amendment. A majority of the Courts of Appeals have applied such an amendment when it clarified, but did not substantively change, the operation of an existing Guideline. *E. g.*, *United States* v. *Caballero*, 936 F. 2d 1292, 1299 n. 8 (CADC 1991); *United States* v. *Urbanek*, 930 F. 2d 1512, 1514–1515 (CA10 1991); *United States* v. *Lillard*, 929 F. 2d 500, 502–503 (CA9 1991); *United States* v. *Fiala*, 929 F. 2d 285, 290 (CA7 1991); *United States* v. *Nissen*, 928 F. 2d 690, 694–695 (CA5 1991); *United States* v. *Perdomo*, 927 F. 2d 111, 116–117 (CA2 1991); *United States* v. *Fells*, 920 F. 2d 1179, 1184 (CA4 1990) (Wilkins, J.), cert. denied., ___ U. S. ___ (1991).

In contrast, the Eighth Circuit has held that an amend-

ment may not be applied before its effective date. See *United States* v. *Watt*, 940 F. 2d 332, 333 (CA8 1991); *United States* v. *Dortch*, 923 F. 2d 629, 632 n. 2 (CA8 1991). In these cases the Sixth Circuit did not apply an amendment that took effect after the petitioners had been sentenced in district court. But see *United States* v. *Sanchez*, 928 F. 2d 1450, 1458–1459 (CA6 1991) (applying such an amendment).

The United States Sentencing Commission has not addressed this recurring issue. See 56 Fed. Reg. 22762–22797 (1991) (Nov. 1991 Guideline amendments). See generally *Braxton* v. *United States*, ___ U. S. ___, ___ (1991). Accordingly, I would grant certiorari and consolidate these cases to resolve the conflict in the circuit courts.